

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. A system for providing interactive content to a user, said system
2 comprising:
3 a user reception device for the reception of broadcast signals;
4 a video display associated with the user reception device for displaying a
5 user-perceptible form of the broadcast signals to the user;
6 a decoding device communicating with the user reception device, the
7 decoding device being programmed to execute an interactive program written for the
8 broadcast content;
9 a server network device communicating with the decoding device, the
10 server network device being programmed to download segments of the interactive
11 program to the decoding device;
12 a communication device communicating with the decoding device and
13 with the server network device; and
14 a memory system communicating with the server network device and the
15 decoding device, the memory system storing segments of the interactive program;
16 wherein the interactive content is synchronized to segments of the
17 broadcast content which are interrelated to the interactive content.
18
- 1 2. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the interactive program
2 written for the broadcast content comprises HTML pages, the HTML pages comprising
3 the interactive content, the HTML pages being displayed to the user on the video display.
4
- 1 3. The system recited in claim 2, wherein the interactive program
2 further comprises JavaScript code associated with the HTML pages, the JavaScript code
3 providing interactive functionality within the HTML pages.
4
- 1 4. The system recited in claim 3, wherein the provided interactive
2 functionality comprises user-selectable operators for selecting different interactive
3 functions.
4
- 1 5. The system recited in claim 2, wherein the HTML pages further
2 comprise the broadcast content.
3
- 1 6. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the interactive content is
2 synchronized to segments of the broadcast content by events within the broadcast content.

7. The system recited in claim 6, wherein the events within the broadcast content are triggers inserted in the broadcast content.

8. The system recited in claim 6, wherein the events within the broadcast content are time markers.

9. The system recited in claim 7, wherein the triggers are inserted at pre-determined segments within the broadcast content and activate segments of the interactive program that are interrelated to the broadcast content being presented to the user during the pre-determined segments.

10. The system recited in claim 7, wherein the triggers comprise a URL, the URL comprising an Internet address.

11. The system recited in claim 9, wherein the segments of the interactive program provide character insights to the user, the character insights being interrelated with the broadcast content being presented to the user during the pre-determined segment of the broadcast.

12. The system recited in claim 9, wherein the segments of the interactive program provide at least one of comments and observations to the user, the at least one of comments and observations being interrelated with the broadcast content being presented to the user during the pre-determined segment of the broadcast.

13. The system recited in claim 9, wherein the segments of the interactive program provide the user's status in a fan club, the fan club being interrelated to the broadcast content.

14. The system recited in claim 9, wherein the segments of the interactive program provide an opportunity for the user to predict what will happen at a later time in the program.

15. The system recited in claim 9, wherein the segments of the interactive program provide questions to the user about past events in a program.

1 16. The system recited in claim 9, wherein the segments of the
2 interactive program provide facts and information to the user, the facts and information
3 being interrelated with the broadcast content being presented to the user during the pre-
4 determined segment of the broadcast.

1 17. The system recited in claim 16, wherein the facts and information
2 are provided to the user in a question and answer format, the answer being displayed
3 automatically a pre-determined time interval after the question is displayed.

1 18. The system recited in claim 16, wherein the facts and information
2 are provided to the user in a question and answer format, the user inputting an answer in
3 response to a displayed question.

1 19. The system recited in claim 18, wherein the user is provided with
2 on-screen feedback about the user's answer.

1 20. The system recited in claim 16, wherein the facts and information
2 are provided to the user in a "true or false" question format, the user inputting an answer
3 in response to a displayed question.

1 21. The system recited in claim 18, wherein rewards are given to users
2 who answer the displayed question correctly.

1 22. The system recited in claim 21, wherein the rewards comprise a
2 number of points.

1 23. The system recited in claim 22, wherein the same number of points
2 is earned for each correct answer.

1 24. The system recited in claim 22, wherein the number of points is
2 directly proportional to the difficulty of the question.

1 25. The system recited in claim 22, wherein a number of points is
2 deducted for each incorrect answer.

1 26. The system recited in claim 22, wherein the points are continuously
2 displayed on the HTML page.
3

1 27. The system recited in claim 22, wherein the points are redeemable
2 for merchandise.
3

1 28. The system recited in claim 22, wherein the points are redeemable
2 for additional plays.
3

1 29. The system recited in claim 22, wherein the user is ranked
2 according to the number of points accumulated by the user.
3

1 30. The system recited in claim 22, wherein bonus points are hidden in
2 particular interactive content such that only users who activate the particular interactive
3 content receive the bonus points.
4

1 31. The system recited in claim 18, wherein a single pre-determined
2 question corresponding to a particular trigger in the program content is provided to all
3 users.
4

1 32. The system recited in claim 18, wherein the questions are chosen
2 from a pool of questions, the pool of questions being stored in the memory system.
3

1 33. The system recited in claim 18, wherein the questions are chosen
2 pseudo-randomly.
3

1 34. The system recited in claim 18, wherein the questions are chosen
2 based on the user's past performance.
3

1 35. The system recited in claim 18, wherein the questions are chosen
2 based on the user's preferences.
3

1 36. The system recited in claim 1, wherein different versions of the
2 interactive content may be selected by the user.
3

37. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the user reception device is a television.

38. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the video display is a television screen.

39. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the decoding device is a set-top box.

40. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the communication device is a cable modem.

41. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the memory system comprises a database associated with the server network device.

42. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the decoding device further comprises a memory for storing interactive programs and user information.

43. A method for providing interactive content to a user, said method comprising:
programming a processor to provide interactive content, the interactive content being interrelated to pre-determined broadcast content;
inserting an event within the broadcast content, the event being inserted in the broadcast content at a pre-determined segment, the pre-determined segment being interrelated to pre-determined interactive content;
receiving a broadcast signal, the broadcast signal comprising the broadcast content;
decoding the event as it is encountered in the broadcast content, the decoded event activating a segment of the interactive content; and
displaying both the broadcast content and the activated segment of the interactive content to the user on a video display;
wherein the event activates a segment of the interactive content that is interrelated to the segment of the broadcast content in which the event is inserted.

1 44. The method recited in claim 43, wherein programming a processor
2 to provide interactive content comprises programming a processor to provide interactive
3 content comprising HTML pages, the HTML pages being displayed on the video display.
4

1 45. The method recited in claim 44, wherein programming a processor
2 to provide interactive content further comprises programming the processor to provide
3 interactive content which comprises JavaScript code associated with the HTML pages,
4 the JavaScript code providing interactive functionality to the HTML pages.
5

1 46. The method recited in claim 43, wherein programming a processor
2 to provide interactive content comprises programming a processor to provide interactive
3 content comprising HTML pages, the HTML pages further comprising the broadcast
4 content.
5

1 47. The method recited in claim 43, wherein inserting an event within
2 the broadcast content comprises inserting a trigger within the broadcast content.
3

1 48. The method recited in claim 43, wherein receiving a broadcast
2 signal comprises receiving the broadcast signal transmitted by a television broadcast
3 station.
4

1 49. The method recited in claim 43, wherein receiving a broadcast
2 signal comprises receiving the broadcast signal transmitted by a cable provider.
3

1 50. The method recited in claim 43, wherein receiving a broadcast
2 signal comprises receiving the broadcast signal transmitted by a satellite provider.
3

1 51. The method recited in claim 43, wherein decoding the event as it is
2 encountered in the broadcast content comprises programming a processor within a set-top
3 box to decode a trigger inserted in the broadcast content.
4

1 52. The method recited in claim 43, wherein displaying both the
2 broadcast content and the interrelated interactive content to the user on a video display
3 comprises displaying the broadcast content in a reduced form within an HTML page on
4 the video screen.
5

53. The method recited in claim 52, wherein displaying both the broadcast content and the interrelated interactive content to the user on a video display further comprises displaying user-selectable operators, the user-selectable operators enabling a user to select different interactive functions.

54. A method for selling advertising time during a broadcast program by associating advertised products and services with broadcast content, the method comprising:

- providing advertising content, the advertising content being interrelated to pre-determined broadcast content;
- inserting an event within the broadcast content, the event being inserted in a pre-determined segment of the broadcast content, the pre-determined segment of the broadcast content being interrelated to pre-determined advertising content;
- decoding the event as it is encountered in the broadcast content, the decoded event activating the pre-determined advertising content;
- displaying both the broadcast content and the activated pre-determined advertising content to a user on a video display;
- receiving a fee for displaying the activated pre-determined advertising content to the user on the video display.

55. The method recited in claim 54, wherein providing advertising content comprises programming a processor to provide advertising content within an HTML page, the HTML page being displayed on the video display.

56. The method recited in claim 54, wherein inserting an event within the broadcast content comprises inserting a trigger within the broadcast content.

57. The method recited in claim 54, wherein decoding the event as it is encountered in the broadcast content comprises programming a processor within a set-top box to decode a trigger inserted in the broadcast content.

58. The method recited in claim 54, wherein the advertising content comprises user-selectable operators, the user-selectable operators providing interactive functions.

59. The method recited in claim 58, wherein the interactive functions comprise at least one of a hyperlink to a promoter's Website, product-related graphics, product-related textual information, a select-to-buy operator, and streaming video.

60. A system for providing to a user interactive enabling system interactive content that is synchronized to broadcast content, the system comprising:
an insertion device for inserting events into broadcast content;
a transmission device for transmitting the broadcast content to the user interactive enabling system;
a server network device communicating with the user interactive enabling system; and
a memory system communicating with the server network device, the memory system storing the interactive content;
wherein the inserted events are synchronized to particular segments of the broadcast content and activate particular segments of the interactive content interrelated to the particular segments of the broadcast content such that both the broadcast content and the interrelated interactive content are displayed on the user interactive enabling system.

61. The system recited in claim 60, wherein the interactive content comprises HTML pages, the HTML pages being displayed to the user.

62. The system recited in claim 61, wherein the interactive content further comprises JavaScript code associated with the HTML pages, the JavaScript code providing interactive functionality within the HTML pages.

63. The system recited in claim 62, wherein the provided interactive functionality comprises user-selectable operators for selecting different interactive functions.

64. The system recited in claim 61, wherein the HTML pages further comprise the broadcast content.

65. The system recited in claim 60, wherein the events inserted in the broadcast content are triggers.

66. The system recited in claim 60, wherein the events inserted in the broadcast content are time markers.

67. The system recited in claim 65, wherein the triggers comprise a URL, the URL comprising an Internet address.

68. The system recited in claim 60, wherein the transmission device is a television broadcast station transmitter.

69. The system recited in claim 60, wherein the transmission device is a transmission cable.

70. The system recited in claim 60, wherein the transmission device is a satellite transmitter.

71. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the memory system comprises a database associated with the server network device.

72. A user interactive enabling system for receiving interactive content that is synchronized to broadcast content, the system comprising:

a user reception device for receiving broadcast signals, the broadcast signals comprising broadcast content;
a video display associated with the user reception device for displaying a user-perceptible form of the broadcast content to the user; and
a decoding device communicating with the user reception device, the decoding device being programmed to decode events inserted in particular segments of the broadcast content;

wherein the inserted events are synchronized to particular segments of the broadcast content and activate particular segments of the interactive content interrelated to the particular segments of the broadcast content such that both the broadcast content and the interrelated interactive content are displayed on the video display.

73. The user interactive enabling system recited in claim 72, further comprising a communication device for communicating over a network.

1 74. The user interactive enabling system recited in claim 73, wherein
2 the server network device downloads the interactive content to the decoding device.
3

1 75. The user interactive enabling system recited in claim 72, wherein
2 the user reception device is a television.
3

1 76. The user interactive enabling system recited in claim 72, wherein
2 the video display is a television screen.
3

1 77. The user interactive enabling system recited in claim 72, wherein
2 the decoding device is a set-top box.
3

1 78. The user interactive enabling system recited in claim 73, wherein
2 the communication device is a cable modem.
3

1 79. The user interactive enabling system recited in claim 72, wherein
2 the decoding device further comprises a memory for storing interactive content and user
3 information.
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